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ABSTRACT

This document is a brief presentation of the relation among education, culture, and development in the Latin American and Caribbean countries that focuses on two major aspects: (1) the new development strategies currently being implemented in the region, and (2) the educational actions being undertaken as an answer to the new challenges posed by the new development strategies. The Latin American and Caribbean countries have initiated a significant process of change within their social and economic development's strategies. These new trends recognize that traditional strategies of development were based on three main factors: (1) the income of natural resources; (2) the external debt; and (3) the internal financial imbalance associated with high inflation taxes. Within this framework, Latin America's peculiarity lies on the fact that some countries attained economic growth while others achieved somewhat minimal equity levels, yet none fulfilled both the expected objectives of the development process simultaneously: growth and equity. Within the context of a development pattern based on the aforementioned factors, education's performance was only slightly connected with the demands of economic growth (due to the minimal use of technical progress as a production factor) and with the political or social integration requirements (because incorporation of the population in their capacity as citizens was weak and recurrently influenced by lengthy periods of authoritarianism and political exclusion). Curriculum innovations include decentralization, extension of participation to those outside the system, and new teaching methods. Obstacles to educational improvement are language differences and objections to conceiving the intercultural dimension as including the entire school population. (Author/DK)

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CONTRIBUTION OF EDUCATION TO CULTURAL DEVELOPMENT

"Education, culture and development:
co-ordinated policies and strategies.
The situation in Latin America and the Caribbean"

by

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Introduction

1. This brief presentation of the relation between education, culture and development in the Latin American and Caribbean countries will focus on two major aspects:

- the new development strategies currently being implemented in the region, and
- the educational actions being undertaken as an answer to the new challenges posed by the new development strategies.

The development strategies

2. The Latin American and Caribbean countries have initiated a significant process of change within their social and economic development's strategies. These new trends recognize that traditional strategies of development were based on three main factors: the income of natural resources, the external debt and the internal financial imbalance associated with high inflation taxes. Within this framework, Latin America's peculiarity lies on the fact that some countries attained economic growth while others achieved somewhat minimal equity levels, yet none fulfilled both the expected objectives of the development process simultaneously: growth and equity ^{1/}.

3. Within the context of a development pattern based on the aforementioned factors, education's performance was only slightly connected with the demands of economic growth (due to the minimal use of technical progress as a production factor) and with the political or social integration requirements (because incorporation of the population in their capacity as citizens was weak and recurrently influenced by lengthy periods of authoritarianism and political exclusion). This process gave rise to the reinforcement of a greatly expanded educational provision in terms of coverage which, notwithstanding, had evident weaknesses from the standpoint of quality and of institutional management mechanisms ^{2/}.

4. At the end of the 70s and beginning of the 80s, this development pattern showed clear signs of exhaustion. During the decade of the 80s a major internal change took place both from the political and economic standpoint. From the political point of view, processes of consolidation or of transition to democracy were promoted, political debate was depolarized and the culture of the

1. Fernando Fajnzylber. Industrialización en América Latina: de la "caja negra" al casillero vacío. Santiago, Cuadernos de la CEPAL, 1989.

2. Germán W. Rama. Educación, participación y estilos de desarrollo en América Latina. Buenos Aires, Kapelusz, 1984.

consensus and concerted action was broadened. Within the economic sphere, commitment was made to serve the external debt by means of a substantial surplus in the trade balance, implying adoption of strategies aimed at strengthening incorporation in the international market by increasing exports. The competitiveness needed to attain this integration was ensured by means of a reduction in wages ("spurious competitiveness") instead of supporting itself on the incorporation of technical progress, increase in productivity and wages ("authentic competitiveness")^{3/}.

5. Short-term estimates tended to perceive the problem of the crisis as circumstantial and not as the exhaustion of the development pattern. In this context, education expenditure was not seen as a factor to be protected due to its strategic importance. Reductions were substantive and affected crucial items from the standpoint of quality and equality of educational provision^{4/}. The combined impact of the reduction of public expenditure in education and of real wages -which weakened the capacity of low income families to cover education costs and to take advantage of the existing educational provision- seriously deteriorated the population's educational situation as well as the general management capacity of the public sector concerning education programmes^{5/}.

6. The level of deterioration reached during the 80s was a necessary condition yet not sufficient to explain the generalized acceptance of the hypothesis on the exhaustion of the traditional pattern of socio-economic and educational development in Latin America and Caribbean countries. This hypothesis, raised and discussed in several recent documents elaborated by international

- 3. CEPAL. Transformación productiva con equidad. La tarea prioritaria del desarrollo de América Latina y el Caribe en los años noventa. Santiago de Chile, marzo de 1990.
- 4. Fernando Reimers. Duda externa y financiamiento de la educación. Su impacto en Latinoamérica. OREALC/UNESCO, Santiago de Chile, 1991. Id. "Educación para todos en América Latina en el siglo XXI. Los desafíos de la estabilización, el ajuste y los mandatos de Jomtien", in OREALC/UNESCO. Boletín del Proyecto Principal de Educación, No. 23, diciembre de 1990.
- 5. Luis Ratinoff. "Necesidades de Educación Básica en América Latina y prioridad política de la Reforma de la Educación Primaria", in OREALC/UNESCO. Boletín del Proyecto Principal de Educación. No. 28, agosto de 1992.

cooperation bodies ^{6/}, is associated with the formulation of a new proposal for economic and social development in which the exhaustion of the traditional pattern may be more clearly appreciated.

7. The new ideas concerning economic growth are being rapidly spread in Latin America, within a context of depolarization of the political debate and yet of increasing social polarization. From this perspective, the peculiarity of the region's contribution to the debate on social development has been the emphasis placed on the need for economic policies to face simultaneously the problem of growth and of social equity. In this "integrated approach", social equity is not conceived as an external factor of economic growth but as a variable whose performance has significant productive and institutional effects which, if not taken into account, unables explaining and ensuring the sustained nature of the processes of economic growth ^{7/}.

8. Technical progress is the variable enabling articulation and compatibility of the objectives of growth and equity. Growth without technical progress implies continuing to support competitiveness through a reduction in wages and the depredation of natural resources. However, analyses of international economy perspectives reveal these factors are unable to ensure processes of sustained growth due to two main reasons: (i) low cost manpower is weighing increasingly less in the elucidation of economic productivity and (ii) environmental demands are becoming an increasingly important factor in the processes of the integration in the international market.

9. In turn, equity and environmental sustainability without technical progress are also goals which cannot be achieved, as it would imply restraining economic growth, thus bringing about a level of isolation incompatible with the extent of development and social expectations presently attained by the majority of the countries of the region.

10. Incorporation of technical progress to production implies undertaking systematic and deliberate actions in various fields, one of which is precisely that of education. However, the important issue in this discussion lies in emphasizing the fact that the link between technical progress and education places the problem in the ambit of the quality of education and not merely on the coverage or years of study. For an effective contribution of

6. CEPAL/UNESCO. *Educación y conocimiento: eje de la transformación productiva con equidad*. Santiago de Chile, 1992.

7. CEPAL. *Equidad y Transformación Productiva: un enfoque integrado*. Santiago de Chile, 1992.

education to technical progress, in the context of the current scientific-technical revolution, there is need for it to produce learning achievements in terms of knowledge, skills or values with a view to meeting society's demands for employment. These new approaches radically change the way in which the relationship between education and society are conceived^{8/}. Hence, it does not involve present day education or some kind of educational provision. Implementation of new development patterns, therefore, requires defining strategies of educational change specifically aimed at the quality of learning achievement. Although in Latin America and the Caribbean this new way of thinking is not homogeneous, we already find that a significant group of countries has started implementing strategies of educational change elaborated within the framework of the new development patterns. Following is an attempt at assessing these new lines of change, focusing information on curriculum innovations in basic education and on actions related to non-formal education and adult literacy.

Curriculum innovations and teaching-learning techniques

11. Several countries in Latin America have initiated processes of curriculum change^{9/}. However, evaluation of the experiences carried out in past decades has proven that they have by a very weak impact on actual pedagogical practices which take place in the classroom, especially those serving students of low income families. The present curriculum innovations are associated with institutional changes. In this respect, the countries of the region are modifying their school organization models by promoting decentralization, greater autonomy of the institutions and by strengthening, at the central level, capacities to measure learning achievement and compensate differences. The hypothesis fostering these changes is based on the fact that decentralization and greater school autonomy will reinforce the link between school culture and social culture as well as the levels of accountability.

12. Another important innovation in the strategies of curriculum change is that of extending participation of the external actors of the system in defining curriculum proposals. Traditional models of

^{8.} Robert Reich. *The Work of Nations*, New York, A.A. Knopf, 1991. Alvin Toffler, *El cambio del poder*. Barcelona, Plaza y Janés Ed., 1990. André Gorz, *Méthamorphose du Travail*, París, Ed. Galilée, 1988.

^{9.} For the Mexican case, see CONALTE Perfiles del desempeño para pre-escolar, primaria y secundaria. - SEP s/f. For the Chilean case, see Objetivos fundamentales y contenidos mínimos de la enseñanza general básica y de la enseñanza media. Propuesta, Ley Orgánica Constitucional de Educación, marzo, 1992.

curriculum design placed responsibility for the definition of the curriculum in the actors within the system: teachers, political, administrative and scientific authorities. Further, an educational proposal aimed at meeting learning needs for social performance involves the need for incorporating new actors, who may convey the external social demands to the school apparatus itself. Methodologies for the incorporation of these external actors in the process of curriculum design are still in a preliminary implementation phase. However, there is a visible great interest and participation of entrepreneurs, political and community leaders, labour unions, etc. in the debates on new curriculum trends.

13. Another important dimension of curriculum reform is the change undergone by the teaching methodologies. In the last meeting of the Intergovernmental Committee of the Major Project in Education (PROMEDLAC IV), Ministers of Education recognized that the traditional frontal model had exhausted itself¹⁰, and efforts have been initiated in search of modalities to overcome it. Expansion of education to enable access of the entire population, has made evident the heterogeneous nature of the groups entering the education systems and the lack of flexibility of traditional educational methods to adequately meet educational needs. Lack of efficient responses to the linguistic, age, cultural, geographic, economic and social plurality results in low levels of reading comprehension, high rates of repetition and, consequently, great disparity in ages. Thus, the problem of access becomes a real vicious circle as, in turn, successful teaching encounters greater difficulties when the group is highly heterogeneous. This disparity in ages, in the pre-training for school participation and in the capacity to read in a comprehensive way is of special importance during the first grades. Given that problems are perceived mainly among lower income social sectors, a serious situation arises at the same time in relation to inequity which, in turn, generates additional problems of a political or social nature.

14. Countries are facing the problems detected in primary education with much creativity, both by means of laws and decrees and by carrying out surveys and experiences¹¹. Innovative elements have been introduced in curriculum design and in teaching-learning techniques in more than half the countries of the region.

10. UNESCO, Informe Final, Cuarta Reunión del Comité Regional Intergubernamental del Proyecto Principal en la esfera de la Educación en América Latin y el Caribe, Quito, Ecuador, 22-25 abril 1991, pg. 20.

11. UNESCO/OREALC, Mejoramiento de la educación en un contexto de crisis, in Boletín del Proyecto Principal de Educación, No. 26, diciembre 1991.

Important efforts have been made in: preparing entry to primary education; teaching of reading, of scientific thought and of citizen values; bilingual education; personalized learning; team work and generation of stimulating learning situations by means of modules that include elements to evaluate qualification to proceed to the following module. Emphasis should be placed, most especially, on the importance of these experiences with a view to developing efficient multigrade schools to enable, eventually, providing universal basic education. This type of school is essential in order to provide high quality complete basic education in regions with dispersed populations. Furthermore, this training modality provides realistic preparation for the incorporation in the productive world of work.

15. An integral approach to child development has predominated in the preparation for primary enrolment. Techniques and methodologies focused on the child's needs and community level activities are starting to be increasingly applied in pre-primary courses. However, this progress in pre-primary education has produced an ever growing gap in primary programmes (with the exception of some countries that have significantly improved the quality of primary education, such as in the case of the "Escuela Nueva" Programme in Colombia). Renewed emphasis on the issue of the quality of primary education will, no doubt, contribute towards solving this problem.

16. In recent years, there has been an increase in the number of research and experimentation concerning the most adequate methodologies for the teaching of reading and writing, given the close relationship between acquisition of these skills and school success ^{12/}. In English-speaking Caribbean countries special efforts have been made to improve the levels of reading comprehension and standard English. In other instances, manuals suggesting ways to improve teaching have been made available ^{13/}. Likewise, programmes on textbooks to foster everyday activities (especially reading) have been implemented or new materials and

12. N. Elichiry, Alfabetización en el primer ciclo escolar: dilemas y alternativas, UNESCO-OREALC, 1991. See also, "Informe final. Reunión sobre Lecto-escritura como factor de fracaso escolar". PICPEMCE, Ciudad de México, 16-18 de octubre de 1989.

13. E. Ferreiro, A. Pelicier, B. Rodríguez, A. Silva and S. Vernon, Haceres, quehaceres y deshaceres con la lengua escrita en la escuela rural, Libros del Rincón, SEP, México, 1991.

methods better adapted to the local context have been tested ^{14/}. In Mexico a campaign has been launched for the donation to schools by private enterprises of typewriters -now replaced by micro-computers- so that children may learn to read and write using the keyboard ^{15/}. Some countries have promoted remedial reading programs, especially in marginal areas, combined with efforts aimed at stimulating self-confidence in students who have previously failed ^{16/}. On occasions, a closer link between the teaching of reading and writing and arithmetic has been promoted in primary schools as well as between adult literacy and community development, aiming at providing an integrated solution to the problem.

17. The success achieved in initiating children on attitudes, processes and methods of scientific thought has proved of special interest, mainly due to their relation with economic sector demands ^{17/}. In some of those experiences emphasis has been placed on team work, with self-learning modules and texts containing questions leading to sequences of observation of phenomena, description and writing, confrontation with scientific principles and evaluation applied to other situations. Implementation of these experiences in demonstrative schools that are later visited by other teachers, has been very successful, as they show the feasibility of teaching within a scientific thought in spite of the very limited resources available. The use of newspapers in "school panels" classified and organized in such a way as to enable recuperating the information, in a similar way to the use of an encyclopedia, has proved very successful. Small classroom and school libraries, enabling students to undertake additional work, have stimulated their personal task. In several countries, scientific fairs and exhibitions, scientific or mathematic olympics and debates on community problems whose solution may be facilitated by means of the use of science or technology have been organized.

- 14. Colección Libros del Rincón, Unidad de Publicaciones de la Secretaría de Educación Pública, México. See also, Dialogar y Descubrir. Manual del Instructor Comunitario, Consejo Nacional de Fomento Educativo, México, 1989.
- 15. E. Ferreiro, Presentación en Seminario Regional sobre Estrategias de acción para la satisfacción de necesidades básicas de aprendizaje, UNESCO-OREALC, abril, 1992.
- 16. Programme to improve the quality of primary schools in poor areas. A Chilean experience. The Major Project Bulletin, Nº 27, April 1992, pp. 29-40.
- 17. CEPAL-UNESCO, Educación y Comocimiento: eje de la transformación productiva con equidad, Santiago, Chile, 1992.

18. Concurrently with this progress, several countries reveal the difficulty encountered in defining and implementing an adequate science curriculum at the level of creativity and cognitive development of basic primary education, which is the only opportunity for systematic learning provided to more than half the young people of the region. In certain countries science is still considered as a beneficial activity only for the limited number of students who are planning on scientific or technical careers. In those cases there is need for envisaging science teaching as a clear social function within education as a whole or as a training modality aimed at providing the student a scientific culture and a method to acquire knowledge in harmony with the modern world. It seems there is urgent need to clarify why (and how) to teach science in basic education, based on the demands and existing availabilities in each country as well as on a growing relationship of general education with the world of work.

19. In almost all Member States having a significant percentage of indigenous population, new modalities of Intercultural Bilingual Education has been developed and tested ^{18/}. There is deeper awareness concerning the complex and heterogeneous linguistic and cultural reality of many countries of the region, the importance of the mother tongue and culture as an essential tool for the progress of education and, the need for the indigenous populations to overcome their present marginality. This has given rise to the establishment of National Programmes or General Departments of Bilingual Education in countries such as Ecuador, Bolivia, Peru, Guatemala and Mexico. Even though some of these programmes have already been executed with positive and encouraging results, it is important to observe development of the new programmes and to duly evaluate them in order to obtain the necessary information on which to base formulation of appropriate strategies. In any case, the project evaluations, with a longstanding application and an acceptable level of technical and financial inputs, have revealed that bilingual education improve the student school achievement and that the introduction in the curriculum of local culture elements produces greater motivation, thus having a positive bearing on the reduction of repetition, absenteeism and temporary and permanent drop-out.

20. Notwithstanding, there are three major obstacles in implementing this educational modality within the national education systems, compelling governments to carry out meticulous development and a gradual generalization of intercultural bilingual education. First, there is difficulty in introducing non-standardized vernacular tongues in a formal pedagogical process. The second is the existence of varieties of each indigenous tongue that compels undertaking field research to determine geographic

18 La educación intercultural bilingüe en América Latina, in Perspectivas, No. 75 20(3), UNESCO, Paris, 1990.

limits where each type of material should be applied. Finally, objections are raised as to the issue of conceiving the intercultural dimension as including the entire school population and society as a whole. A persistent trend considers intercultural dimension as exclusively pertaining to the bilingual population, when in fact it should include all the population with a view to fostering respect, knowledge and mutual understanding. Persistence of this approach explains that, in many instances, intercultural bilingual education is considered as an isolated activity from the rest of the education system, thus reproducing the marginality circuit affecting the indigenous population. There is need for overcoming these three limitations so as to allow for the participation of the citizen in all State and society structures as of their linguistic and cultural identity.

21. Some countries have reduced rigidity of the grades by successfully introducing work carried out by means of modules, including evaluation and promotion by this same method. Work through modules is a system of learning credits which has a significant bearing on a region where harvesting compels many children to temporary drop-out leading to repetition upon their return due to their incapability to overcome the deficit caused by their absence from school. The use of modules enables students to pass on to the module following that already approved at the time of their temporary drop-out and avoids having to repeat all the subjects (which in many cases are precisely those previously studied and commanded before their absence)^{19/}. This modality takes into account individuality and avoids "false" repetition without increasing the teacher's workload^{20/}. Other countries have tackled the repetition symptom by means of various modalities of automatic promotion and by cycles, which are often liable to stress the low quality of education that definitely leads to repetition^{21/}.

22. Jointly with the efforts to develop higher level intellectual skills, the countries have updated their curricula including new contents, generally by means of laws or decrees. In the Anglo-speaking Caribbean, new themes within the traditional subjects have been included (infusion). Throughout the region the introduction

^{19/}. C. Rojas and Z. Castillo, *Evaluación del programa Escuela Nueva en Colombia*, Instituto SER de Investigaciones, Bogotá, 1988.

^{20.} E. Schiefelbein, R. Vera, H. Aranda, Z. Vargas and V. Corco, *Descubra su capacidad de aprendizaje*, Revista Educación, Ministerio de Educación, Santiago, 1992.

^{21.} E. Schiefelbein, *Repetition in Latin America's primary schools: magnitudes, causes and possible solutions*. LATHR, The World Bank, May 1992.

of new thematic areas have been tested, such as: environmental education, population education, drug and SIDA prevention, and health and nutrition education. Introduction of these themes (without the provision of self-learning modules) presents at least two kinds of problems: the interdisciplinary treatment required by these contents and the limited training and guidance of teachers who are to develop them. In spite of the training programmes and of the campaigns carried out in many countries to promote awareness, the introduction of interdisciplinary elements has only been attained in a very limited number of cases when the curriculum is organized by subjects.

23. Experiences on the student government and the participation of students in productive projects and community work seem to have been successful as concerns training of citizen values. Turnover of all students (especially in small schools) assuming different responsibilities, in relatively short periods of time (two to four months) ensures a personal view of the best ways to organize the community to accomplish its objectives. These activities are sometimes supplemented by curriculum planning and by the school's extracurricular activities.

24. The countries have accorded special attention to the theme on education for peace and international understanding, which has awakened growing interest owing to the existence of armed conflicts in the region. Actions undertaken in this field have been numerous, including those mentioned above concerning citizen training and the incorporation within the curriculum of activities on moral development of the child and of themes on peace and cooperation. Meetings and workshops have been carried out at national, subregional and regional levels in order to exchange experiences and specific materials for teachers, and radio and television programmes have been produced dedicated to the promotion of a better understanding among peoples. Special emphasis has been placed on the treatment of these contents in the UNESCO Associated Schools Plan, which at present has been extended to the majority of the countries of the region, involving over 300 institutions at all educational levels, from pre-school to higher education. There is agreement as to the need for promoting attitudes enabling greater respect for human rights and the fundamental liberties within the framework of the democratization process which is starting to be reinforced in the region. To this effect, activities related to fostering peace and understanding among the peoples constitute an important contribution.

Literacy and non-formal education actions

25. It is important to highlight efforts undertaken to serve indigenous illiterates according to new approaches, favouring teaching-learning of their mother tongue and the production of self-learning modules, reading primers and textbooks which take into account their cultural characteristics. However, quite often,

a global approach to consider also the most adequate strategies for the teaching of reading and writing in the official language - unknown to many- has been missing, as well as for teaching at oral level in order to guarantee transfer of the acquired skills in their mother tongue to the official language. In several cases, resistance of the indigenous adults to literacy in their own tongue stems from the fact that they do not clearly see the advantage of initiating learning of reading and writing in a language not socially recognized; whereas the settings in which they live make acquisition of the official language essential in order to meet the needs and assert their rights. This perception may be the outcome of lack of information on the most efficient methods to achieve, eventually, command of the official language.

26. Partial evaluations of on-going literacy programmes reveal deficiencies in the follow-up, strengthening and consolidation of what has been learned by the newly literates, thus contributing to neutralize a substantial part of literacy achievement. Among these deficiencies, emphasis should be placed on the lack of reading policies as well as those related to the training of readers that should include: (i) elaboration and mass use of reading materials ^{22/}, and (ii) incentives to help individuals associate their training as readers with better life conditions. Likewise, there is an obvious shortage of methods and materials for the teaching of mathematics -notwithstanding the fact that there are some experiences with excellent results- discouraging certain adults who are especially interested in this field.

27. Evaluation and systematization of the literacy experiences are growing activities to which the countries have accorded high priority with a view to having available the most adequate alternatives to face the challenge of coming years. The first evaluations of literacy programmes have been finalized, some of them quite good, having enabled defining the programmes with sufficient precision as to allow their mass implementation, independently from the author or team responsible for having initiated the experience. Among them, attention should be drawn to the evaluation of bilingual education programmes for young people and adults; citizen training for women ^{23/}; programmes involving

22. The Colección Libros del Rincón published by the Unidad de Publicaciones of SEP, Mexico, directed by Marta Acevedo, is an exception. UNESCO and the Fondo de Cultura Económica de México organized the "Periolibros" project in which an important Latin American newspaper chain will publish, on a monthly basis as of October 1992, works of 24 prominent authors of the region.

23. E. Dasso and S. Montano, *Identidad y ciudadanía. Educación cívica y mujer rural en la subregión Andina*, UNESCO-OREALC, Santiago, Chile, 1991.

parents supporting their children's education or the use of equipment in their children's schools; and radiophonic programmes, which broadcast sketches together with the use of reading primers and distance follow-up techniques and the use of other mass communication media such as TV and newspapers ^{24/}. Evaluations suggest certain changes, among them, the need for simplifying content of the educational materials in use and for according special importance to the elaboration and use of manuals for literacy trainers as a basic means for their own training. Evaluations also point out the advisability for formulating selective priorities (groups which owing to their special characteristics should be served), both as concerns geographic areas as in relation to social activity sectors ^{25/}.

Conclusion

28. Latin American and Caribbean countries are facing simultaneously the challenge to consolidate democracy, social equity and integration and generate the economic growth that enables the satisfaction of such aspiration in a stable and sustainable manner. New strategies of development demand a crucial contribution of the educational system. This point has been recognized by a recent document approved during the last period of sessions of ECLAC, where education and knowledge are conceived as central of the changing production patterns with social equity. The unanimous agreement of this document -prepared jointly by ECLAC and UNESCO ^{26/} allow us to be optimistic about the near future of the region.

^{24.} M. N. Cuculiza and D. Kalinowski (comp.), *Medios de comunicación al servicio de la alfabetización y postalfabetización*, UNESCO-OREALC, Santiago, Chile, 1991.

^{25.} Suggestions and recommendations for action to reduce functional illiteracy, proposed by the regional specialistas convened in their personal capacity by the Preparatory Technical Consultation of the International Literacy Year, are included in REDALF, "1990. Año Internacional de la Alfabetización", UNESCO-OREALC 1988.

^{26/} CEPAL/UNESCO Document. Op. cit.